



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN  
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF  
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

## The Order's Chapter House Church in Florence



In 1986, the Archbishop of Florence assigned the Church of Saints James and Philip to the Order.

The Church of Saints James and Philip, located in the 14th century hospital complex, on the Via della Scala, is a symbol of the history of Florence. The first concrete information about it dates back to 1587; and concerns the concession, by the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinand I to Vittorio di Pellegrino dell'Ancisa, of the building in which it is located. The objective was to found a hospice for pilgrims, in what had been a hospital under the patronage of the Michi, a prominent Guelph party family. In 1589, which was a year of poverty and famine, Messer Vittorio gave shelter there to a young woman "whose honor was under threat." She was the first of many to whom he gave religious instruction and taught a trade, "away from the dangers of poverty." The "Congregation of Charity", as they were called, was housed in the convent, while the reception of pilgrims continued in the adjoining hospital, with great efficiency and in a spirit of charity; there, guests received food, shelter, and clothing.

The church was renovated in 1626-1627 at the expense of Archbishop Alessandro Marzi Medici, whose coat of arms, as well as those of the Michi family, can be seen in the building. Most of the original furniture and some paintings have disappeared, but the series of frescoes representing the corporal works of mercy recall the spirit of charity that has always graced these walls, as do the decorative motifs; heads of stone angels whose outstretched wings end in volutes, framing the portals on each side of the high altar. This altar is surmounted by a magnificent carved and gilded frame, which houses a ray of light with small silver clouds around the central niche. In the old choir can be found 17th century painting, from the Florentine school, depicting the Immaculate Conception; on the left wall of the altar, there is another from the same period, which can be attributed to an artist from Matteo Rosselli's circle, of the Virgin in glory with Saint Gherardo da Villamagna and Saint Sebastian. It is a beautiful work of art, with interesting details: for example, the holy martyr is sometimes depicted as a richly dressed young knight with an arrow in his hand, which is why one can identify in him the young man in front of the hermit.

In 1821, the church and the rooms in Via della Scala were given to the Brotherhood of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, which emerged from within an older institution, the Society dedicated to Saint Francis of Paola. They were removed by Pietro Leopoldo in 1785 and then restored in 1792. The Brotherhood, thanks mainly to the Bargagli Petrucci family, carried out consolidation works on the building, then other works to repair the damage caused by the Arno in 1966. But, in 1986, due to the gradual decrease in the number of members and the consequent reduction in activity and therefore in the use of the premises, the Archbishop of Florence, Cardinal Silvano Piovanelli, decided to assign the chapel and the ancient large choir to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. The attentive and loving care of our brothers and sisters has since written a new chapter in the history of this prestigious Florentine church.

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